UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1995/NGO/4
23 May 1995

ENGLISH ONLY

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
Annual session 1995
22-26 May 1995
Items 3 and 4 of the provisional agenda*

FOR INFORMATION

STATEMENT BY THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTEE ON UNICEF

1. Mr. President, the Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) Committee on UNICEF warmly welcomes the new Executive Director, Carol Bellamy, to her important post, but even more so, to the partnership which UNICEF from its inception has built up with NGOs. Our expectations of her run very high.

2. The spring 1995 issue of Foreign Policy carried an article by the Secretary-General of the United Nations entitled "A New Departure on Development". Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali speaks to the several United Nations conferences which have recently taken place as the "development continuum". He concludes his article by saying, "Our task today is two-fold: first, to concentrate our cooperation on the conflicts now raging in order to deal with them more effectively and make it possible to see beyond them; and second, to recognize that the confrontational perception of the development process in decades past must now be transcended through a new understanding that development is an inescapable need for every nation in the world, and for all nations together".

3. The NGO Committee on UNICEF and its partner organizations around the world are keenly aware that the decade of the 1990s has brought new opportunities as well as new challenges for social development. Clearly it is timely to articulate new partnerships as new ways of accomplishing the development task.

4. To allow this process to take place, the NGO Committee's agenda is focusing on crucial steps necessary for the way to be opened to maximize the opportunities and meet the challenges of the 1990s, the first decade of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5. It is, of course, within the framework of this vitally important Convention that so many of the activities of the NGO Committee and its members are carried out. It is also within that same framework that the new mission statement for UNICEF needs to articulate an approach to the child in the context of the family and community, and not in isolation of these significant elements in child development. It also needs to recognize the role of the father in parenting and the significance of other sibling members of the family as formative in the development of the individual child. Furthermore, we believe that the mission statement should also include an emphasis on the needs of children in especially difficult circumstances, for whom resources are still far from adequate.

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* E/ICEF/1995/13/Rev.1.

6. Among the priorities of the NGO Committee are the following:

(a) The Committee will participate actively in the Fourth World Conference on Women, where it will continue to provide strong support to the new section on girls which has now been included in the Platform of Action. NGOs feel it is essential that the arrangements for the NGO Forum at Beijing facilitate effective interaction with delegations to the Conference. We therefore call on members of the Executive Board to use their influence to ensure that a satisfactory site is provided for the Forum;

(b) The Beijing Conference on Women is the obvious next step after the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, as the world struggles to reorder its priorities towards eliminating extreme poverty and furthering the social inclusion of women and children. Here, too, the NGO Committee has played its part, and we commend to your attention the Committee's report on its Copenhagen workshop entitled "Women and Children in Poverty - What Way Out? (available on the tables in this room).

7. Other items of concern include the following:

(a) We would urge members of the Executive Board to encourage the Open-Ended Working Group on the Review of Arrangements for Consultations with NGOs to support broader participation by NGOs in United Nations conferences and substantive dialogue with NGOs by United Nations organizations;

(b) The management study of UNICEF is an opportunity to define a new form of partnership with NGOs, taking into account the historic and supportive role which NGOs have played in the past. This collaboration between NGOs and UNICEF has made UNICEF unique among the United Nations organizations. We hope that the Executive Board might give support to the inclusion of a representative of the NGO Committee on UNICEF within the global advisory council that will assist the implementation of the management study. That action would enable optimum use to be made of our historical and practical links with UNICEF;

(c) Likewise, NGOs encourage UNICEF to play a proactive role in the HABITAT II Conference. UNICEF's creative initiatives in meeting with Mayors as Defenders of Children have moved the goals of the World Summit to a grass-roots level where the human environment shapes the daily lives of children;

(d) UNICEF's responsibility in monitoring the progress of nations in meeting the goals of the World Summit for Children is a laudable one and the NGOs stand ready to play a more significant role in support of this process by working with national or indigenous NGOs through capacity-building and resource transfer.

8. We, the members of the NGO Committee to UNICEF, agree with the assessment made by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali; the times require a new development paradigm and the cornerstone of that new paradigm is an inclusive partnership among United Nations organizations, Governments and NGOs. Nothing short of that is adequate to the challenges ahead.